

Fort Indiantown Gap added to list of PFAS contamination sites

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(Lebanon) — Fort Indiantown Gap Army National Guard base in Lebanon County has been added to the state [Department of Environmental Protection's growing list](#) of military and industrial sites where the PFAS class of chemicals has been found.

The toxic chemicals were widely used in industrial and consumer products and are often found around military airstrips where firefighting foam was used. PFAS has been connected to liver damage, high cholesterol and cancer.

PFAS was first detected at the Gap in summer 2017, said Pa. Department of Military and Veterans' Affairs environmental management director John Fronko. It was found in a water well in part of the base called the "training corridor."

"That is where a lot of the live fire artillery ranges are, our strafing pits for our aircraft to come in...not a lot of structures out there but a lot of open training area."

Pa. Department of Military and Veterans Affairs spokesman Joseph Butera added, the well provides water to a small, post-owned building that is not routinely used.

The well water is used for putting out fires and is not designated for drinking water, Fronko said. The base buys most of its drinking water for soldiers from the Lebanon water authority. Other water wells on base tested negative for PFAS, he noted, including one at the residence of the state national guard's top official, the adjutant general.

Additional PFAS testing was done this year, and base officials are awaiting results, Fronko said.

The level of PFAS found at Fort Indiantown Gap was 2.3 parts per trillion, much lower than the Environmental Protection Agency's "health advisory level" of 70 parts per trillion, said state Department of Environmental Protection spokeswoman Elisabeth Rementer.

However, some advocates, such as the nonprofit Environmental Working Group, say not enough is known about PFAS, and "even the smallest doses" of the chemicals are linked to health problems.

"The EPA and the Department of Defense have utterly failed to treat PFAS contamination as a crisis demanding swift and decisive action," said EWG president Ken Cook in a July 11 news release.

The state Department of Environmental Protection is investigating nearly two dozen sites around the state [where PFAS contamination is known to have occurred](#). Most of those are in southeastern Pennsylvania.

The agency also launched [a year-long sampling plan in May](#) to test water from more than 300 public water supplies with a higher potential for contamination, based on their proximity to sites such as military bases, fire training sites, landfills, and manufacturing facilities.

It's uncertain when Fort Indiantown Gap was added to the DEP's list of contaminated sites. Environmental Working Group added it to its interactive map in July, according to spokeswoman Monica Amarelo.

DEP likely added it to its website earlier this year, Rementer said. DEP didn't put out any press release disclosing the findings.

Editor's note: This story has been updated to include additional details, provided after publication, about the well. It has also been updated to correct the spelling of a name.